



# THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND AFTER



## A MONTHLY REVIEW

EDITED BY JAMES KNOWLES.

No. 307. SEPTEMBER, 1902.

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|---|----------------------------------|
| I. Some Blunders and a Scapegoat.                         | By the Hon. JOHN FORTESCUE       |
| II. With the Boers on the North of the Tugela.            | By BARON A. VON MALTZAN          |
| III. Honour to whom Honour is Due.                        | By EDWARD DICEY, C.B.            |
| IV. Conditions of Labour in New Zealand.                  | By TOM MANN                      |
| V. The Beginnings of an Australian National Character.    | By PERCY F. ROWLAND              |
| VI. Education in Egypt.                                   | By R. FITZROY BELL               |
| VII. In the Day-room of a London Workhouse.               | By MISS EDITH SELLERS            |
| VIII. The Inclosure of Stonehenge. ( <i>With a Map.</i> ) | By SIR ROBERT HUNTER             |
| IX. The Fabric Fund of Westminster Abbey.                 | By MISS ROSE M. BRADLEY          |
| X. The Bodleian Library.                                  | By ERNEST A. SAVAGE              |
| XI. The Exhibition of Early Flemish Art in Bruges.        | By MARY H. WITT                  |
| XII. Hymns, Ancient and Modern.                           | By the Right Hon. EARL NELSON    |
| XIII. Reasonableness and the Education Bill.              | By A. W. GATTIE                  |
| XIV. The Development of the Air-ship.                     | By the Rev. JOHN M. BACON        |
| XV. Hafiz.  | By JAMES MEW                     |
| XVI. Last Month: The Coronation.                          | By SIR WEMYSS REID               |
| XVII. Sermon to the Colonial Troops.                      | By the Right Rev. BISHOP WELLDON |

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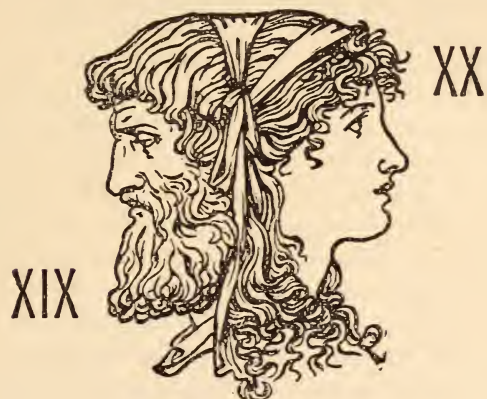
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THE  
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CENTURY  
*AND AFTER*



No. CCCVII—SEPTEMBER 1902

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## HYMNS, ANCIENT AND MODERN

Nelson, Earl

'In quires and places *where* they sing, here followeth the anthem,' points to a very large amount of deadness. According to our modern ideas of Church life, there would be not much appearance of it without singing.

The Wesleys would never have carried on their missions to the neglected heathen population in our midst if they had not had the help of their hymns.

And, in our own day, Moody and Sankey's Hymns, with their telling tunes, became the mainspring of their missionary efforts. We are not now called upon to decide how far these exciting methods help 'to build up a sure foundation' to last to eternity. For my own part, I regret to find the Wesleyans are substituting Moody and Sankey for the sound teaching to be found in Wesley's hymns. It is curious to read that the Wesleyan chaplain with the troops in South Africa, though there were lots of New Testaments, was nearly brought to a stand-still from the want of Moody and Sankey's Hymns.

There is no doubt that a great deal of the slip-slop doggerel that is carried off by a good tune in many of our modern missions, and the careless way in which hymns when wanted for special occasions are composed, have tended to tempt us to scout hymns altogether and to treat them as if they were of no possible good or power, and as if there was no possibility of finding true poetry and true inspiration and sound Gospel truths in any hymns! The Psalms of David have been accepted into daily—almost hourly—use by the whole Church from the beginning, and although Tate and Brady, and even the Presbyterian Psalter in verse (generally limited to four verses at a time), have done their best to belittle hymnology, we cannot ignore the inspiring comfort under every need which the Psalter and the other special hymns in the Bible bring home to us. No one can deny the power of hymns or their poetry and inspiration who has read John Keble's *Christian Year*, or who has fully realised the extraordinary power which that publication had in advancing the great Oxford Movement and bringing life and power into a nearly moribund Church.

It is also well known that throughout Christendom hymns were

written with no small amount of direct inspiration and power. Full of sound doctrine and wonderfully acceptable for the expression of praise for many mercies, I have only to mention the *Te Deum Laudamus*.

But when, in A.D. 1857, I, at the request of Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury, and through the help of John Keble, attempted to bring out the first combination of *Hymns, Ancient and Modern* in the *First Salisbury Hymn Book*, the position of affairs was a peculiar one. It is true that the *Hymnal Noted* had attempted to translate the Latin hymns from the old Service Books, but they had failed to render them into the Anglo-Saxon tongue. They were full of Latinised words, English, because those who knew Latin had adopted them into the English language, but utterly beyond the understanding of the common people. Then with the modern hymns we were no better off. We knew then nothing of the originals. I used to send to Mr. Keble such hymns from the different collections which I thought it necessary we should embody in our book; but they seldom consisted of more than four verses. Mr. Keble used to remark at the scarcity of sound teaching and of scripture reference to be found in these mangled portions, when compared with the rich abundance in this respect to be found in hymns from the Breviary.

This drove us to add a doxology to every hymn to secure sound teaching, and led us much more frequently to alter hymns—which is evidently a great mistake. Before the second Salisbury book was out this difficulty was removed by Lord Selborne, then Roundell Palmer, who brought out the *Book of Praise*, containing the original versions, and at full length, of a great number of the modern hymns. A good man named Sidgwick had taken up the work laboriously, and his labours made the task of comparatively easy attainment. Under this new phase the want of sound teaching and scripture references was no longer a true accusation, and many of the alterations would have been undreamt of, but it all came too late for our first book.

I will give here one specimen of John Keble's alteration of a well-known hymn by Isaac Watts,

When I survey the wondrous Cross.

Of course, though we published it in our book we could not hope it would supplant so well-known and popular a hymn. But it illustrates John Keble's reverential feeling, and illustrates his power, by the alteration of a *few words*, to bring out the fulness of sound teaching. He had, I believe, a false impression that Watts was a Unitarian.

*Watts*

When I survey the wondrous Cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My greatest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

*Keble*

Whereon the *King* of Glory died,  
Learn we to count all gain but loss,  
And pour contempt on all our pride.

*Watts*

4th verse. Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so Divine,  
Demands my hope, my life, my all.

*Keble*

4th verse. Were heaven and earth our own,  
Too small the offering for one throb of Thine;  
O Wondrous Love, our all in all,  
Change us entire to Love Divine!

A good deal was from a desire to make it congregational; but the powerful teaching of Keble's alteration is very manifest.

Though I have pointed out some faults, and ventured to show the cause of our shortcomings from our undertaking the work before we had proper material to deal with it, it must not be thought that this book was not of great help to the formation of a suitable companion to the Prayer Book.

It was the first book published with *Hymns, Ancient and Modern* combined.

It gave improved translations of many Latin hymns.

It boldly broke through, wherever we could, the disparaging mutilation of the four-verse system.

It ventured on difficult metres apart from the common doggerel, trusting to the help of special tunes.

It added, with J. Keble's sanction, a few hymns suitable to public worship from the *Christian Year*.

I would mention here a great difficulty in the selection of hymns; the atrociously bad rhymes which have come about from an alteration in the pronouncing of words. In Wesley's time such a word as *join* was pronounced exactly to rhyme with *divine*. I will give another case. Dr. Mansell of Egham, when I was compiling the Second Book, was greatly disappointed that I did not take any of the beautiful hymns from his book because of the rhymes, and he could never see my objection, because, as an Irishman, he pronounced *Jesus* as the exact rhyme for *Save us*.

I believe the use of *a* for *e* is right in the Latin, but in English it seemed to me to be almost profane.

There were other things I learnt in the compilation of the First Book—the impossibility of getting hymns written to order. To write a lot of hymns to order is sure to result in doggerel; a true inspiration is the only thing which will make a hymn live. I never

asked Mr. Keble to write me a marriage hymn, though I sadly wanted one for my book. It was at the time of the passing of the Divorce Act, to which he and I were greatly opposed. I one day, to my delight, on the inside of an old envelope with the simple words 'Do you think this may help on our work against the Bill?' found the beautiful hymn which I think will ever live in our English Hymn Book.

*A threefold cord is not quickly broken.*—Ecc. iv. 12.

The voice that breathed o'er Eden,  
That earliest wedding-day,  
The primal marriage blessing,  
It hath not passed away:

Still in the pure espousal  
Of Christian man and maid  
The Holy Three are with us,  
The threefold grace is said,

For dower of blessèd children,  
For love and faith's sweet sake,  
For high mysterious union  
Which nought on earth can break.

Be present, awful Father,  
To give away this bride,  
As Eve thou gav'st to Adam  
Out of his own pierced side.

Be present, Son of Mary,  
To join their loving hands,  
As Thou didst bind two natures  
In Thine Eternal bands;

Be present, Holiest Spirit,  
To bless them as they kneel,  
As Thou for Christ, the Bridegroom,  
The heavenly spouse dost seal.

O spread Thy pure wing o'er them,  
Let no ill power find place,  
When onward to Thine Altar  
The hallow'd path they trace,

To cast their crowns before Thee  
In perfect sacrifice,  
Till in the home of gladness  
With Christ's own Bride they rise.

This is true more or less with every hymn that has gained a secure place. Lyte's hymn, 'Abide with me,' was written when near death. 'Rock of Ages' came out first at the end of a short tract which Toplady had written in answer to Wesley, who, he



thought, had taught the possibility of a Christian attaining perfection in this life. 'The only way in which the greatest saint can come before his Maker is in words like these.'

Newman's 'Lead, kindly Light' was written at a time of great distress and searching of heart, though part of its acceptance is due to the beautiful tune and to the misinterpretation of the words

And with the morn those Angel faces smile,  
Which I have loved long since, but lost awhile,

referring to some visions in his youth which used to rejoice his heart.

So, too, with 'Peace, perfect Peace,' by Bishop Bickersteth; and here we have a proof of how dangerous it is for a great poet to add to or alter another poet's hymn, the additional verse to 'Lead, kindly Light' being a confessed failure.

But we must now come to the next book under the influence of the *Book of Praise*, which showed how grievously others as well as ourselves had altered original hymns.

And first with C. Wesley's Christmas Hymn. We found that he had written

Hark how all the welkin rings  
Glory to the King of Kings.

'Welkin' is the old Saxon for the 'juncture line between sky and earth.' I should like to keep the word for its own sake, but much more for its true poetry. I can see Charles Wesley in the early morning crowning the top of some hill on his way to an early celebration, when the steeples of all the churches in the valley ring out the 'Glory to the King of Kings.' For this we have an untruth drafted into the hymn, for there was only *one* herald-angel, and he did not sing 'Glory to the King of Kings.' He gave the message in response to which 'the multitude of the heavenly host' sang the Song of Praise.

Again, in the Ascension Hymn, Wesley wrote in the fifth verse, after describing the Ascension into Heaven:

See, He lifts His Hands above;  
See, He shows the prints of Love;  
Hark! His gracious lips bestow  
Blessings on His Church below,

evidently referring to the 'continual intercession before the Throne.' A lady wrote abusing me for destroying the hymn by putting the fifth verse after the fourth, supposing it only referred to His blessing them as He was taken out of their sight. Wesley knew better, and was teaching true doctrine.

To show how a hymn is damaged by the omission of a verse, I would refer to an old Latin hymn, 'Jordanis oras previa.' It is generally used for Advent, and the second verse is omitted, but it



was originally written for 'John the Baptist's Day' at Midsummer, where the omitted verse brings all the poetry into the hymn :

E'en now the air, the sea, the land,  
 Feel that their Maker is at hand ;  
 The very elements rejoice  
 And welcome Him with cheerful voice.

There is a noble hymn of Jeremy Taylor's which ought to be in a National Hymn Book, though it is of very quaint metre ; but as a general hymn it is applicable to Advent, Lent, and Palm Sunday, and is a good example of the class of hymn which takes the form of a paraphrase of Holy Scripture :

Lord, come away, why dost Thou stay ?  
 Thy road is ready ; and Thy paths made straight,  
 With longing expectation wait—  
 The consecration of Thy beauteous Feet !  
 Ride on triumphantly ! behold we lay  
 Our passions, lusts, and proud wills in Thy Way !  
 Hosannah ! Welcome to our hearts. Lord, here  
 Thou hast a Temple, too, and full as dear  
 As that of Sion ; and as full of sin :  
 Nothing but thieves and robbers dwell therein.  
 Enter ; and chase them forth, and cleanse the floor !  
 Crucify them, that they may never more  
 Profane that holy place,  
 Where Thou hast chose to set Thy Face.  
 And, then, if our stiff tongues shall be  
 Mute in the praises of Thy Deity,  
 The stones out of the Temple wall  
 Shall cry aloud, and call,  
 Hosannah ! and Thy glorious Footsteps greet !

For paraphrases we must not forget 'Nearer, my God, to Thee,' by Mrs. Adams, President McKinley's favourite hymn, on Gen. xxviii. 10, or Charles Wesley's famous paraphrase on Wrestling Jacob, 'Come, O Thou Traveller unknown,' on Gen. xxxii. 24, &c., or 'Know ye the Lord hath borne away,' by Canon Twells, on 2 Kings ii. ; and we have only to refer to Sternold and Hopkins's 'Old Hundredth'—worthy of its tune ; Tate and Brady's 'O God, our help in ages past' ; Wesley's 'Soldiers of Christ, arise' ; and Sir Henry William Baker's best paraphrase of the Twenty-third Psalm, which is so sweet that I must give it :

The King of Love my Shepherd is,  
 Whose goodness faileth never ;  
 I nothing lack if I am His  
 And He is mine for ever.

Where streams of living waters flow  
 My ransomed soul He leadeth,  
 And where the verdant pastures grow  
 With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,  
 But yet in love He sought me,  
 And on His Shoulder gently laid,  
 And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill  
 With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;  
 Thy rod, Thy staff, my comfort still,  
 Thy Cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a Table in my sight;  
 Thy Unction grace bestoweth;  
 And oh, what transport of delight  
 From Thy pure Chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days  
 Thy goodness faileth never;  
 Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise  
 Within Thine House for ever.

But after all it will be asked: 'Is it a right and proper thing to have a Hymn Book as a companion to the Prayer Book, and, if so, of what sort of hymns should it consist?'

If there is to be one, it must be on as broad a basis as the Prayer Book itself: it must be in as pure English, and there must be no attempt to enforce it, for the use of hymns is at present a safety valve from that extreme uniformity which is so opposed to all true unity, and is of itself a burden almost too heavy for us to bear. This points to a selection of good hymns, and the permission of many appendices for missions, for the young, &c. There is no doubt that the old Latin hymns with good English translations should form a prominent part of the book, and they should be placed for the fast or festival for which they were originally written. As we took our Prayer Book from the old Service Books, this would be on direct Reformation lines, and it is well known that Cranmer would have introduced more if there had been the chance of getting suitable translations. John Cosin's translation of Charlemagne's hymn, 'Veni Creator Spiritus,' is a good specimen, and, being a true translation, has obtained a hold amongst our people. John Mason Neale's translations have also popularised many Latin hymns and many valuable selections from Greek hymns. Then there should be a selection of narrative hymns bringing out the teachings of the Christian year, and a large selection of modern hymns which have won their way generally into the hearts of our people.

But this foreshadowing of a future authorised Hymn Book is rather beyond the general intention of the article. Of course a collection of hymns from all sections and all ages of the Church will be in itself a great incentive to true unity. But my chief desire has been to show that there are really many good hymns, the reflex

of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all sorts of people in times of trial—whether of distress or of joy. Such hymns will always contain true poetry and an innate power to move the hearts of men, and this should be enough to save hymns from the degradation which the careless writing of hymns without any special call or inspiration has brought upon them. The inspired Bible is full of the finest poetry. Shakespeare, Tennyson, and other semi-inspired poets arising in our midst from time to time would rank next in their influence for good.

But the poor hymn-writer must not be forgotten. Many a hymn has been known to have great influence in turning men God-ward. And a general book, voicing the religious experiences of men from every clime and in every age, would have no mean share in the formation of our national character.

NELSON.

## ARY DIGEST

[November 15, 1902

### HYMNOLOGY REVIEWED BY AN ENGLISH PEER.

THE veteran Anglican churchman, Lord Nelson, contributes an article full of interesting and suggestive reminiscences to *The Nineteenth Century and After* (September) on the subject, "Hymns, Ancient and Modern." He is well qualified to write on hymnology, for, as is pointed out by the *London Church Review*, he was associated, as far back as fifty years ago, with Bishop Hamilton and John Keble in the publication of a collection of standard hymns. Hymn-singing was at that time comparatively unknown in the Anglican Church, and the attempts to translate the Latin hymns from the old service-books had not been successful. These hymns "were full of Latinized words, English, because those who knew Latin had adopted them into the English language, but utterly beyond the understanding of the common people." Lord Nelson continues:

"With the modern hymns we were no better off. We knew then nothing of the originals. I used to send to Mr. Keble such hymns from the different collections which I thought it necessary we should embody in our book; but they seldom consisted of more than four verses. Mr. Keble used to remark at the scarcity of sound teaching and of Scripture reference to be found in these mangled portions, when compared with the rich abundance in this respect to be found in hymns from the Breviary. This drove us to add a doxology to every hymn to secure sound teaching, and led us much more frequently to alter hymns—which is evidently a great mistake."

One of Mr. Keble's alterations was made in Watts's well-known hymn, "When I survey the wondrous cross." The fourth verse runs:

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so Divine,  
Demands my hope, my life, my all.

This Mr. Keble changed to—

Were heaven and earth our own,  
Too small the offering *for one throb of thine*;  
O Wondrous Love, our all in all,  
Change us entire to Love Divine!



Lord Nelson remarks that we have many more recent instances of "how dangerous it is for a great poet to add to or alter another poet's hymn." And *The Church Review* adds: "Candidly, if Mr. Keble succeeded no better in other hymns than in this one, we do not wonder that the book had only a brief existence."

Altho there were many imperfections in this collection, it represented the first attempt to combine both old and new hymns, and made possible the later hymn-book, now used all over the world, "Hymns, Ancient and Modern." Says Lord Nelson:

"There were many things I learnt in the compilation of the First Book, among them the impossibility of getting hymns written to order. To write a lot of hymns to order is sure to result in doggerel; a true inspiration is the only thing which will make a hymn live. . . . This is true more or less with every hymn that has gained a secure place. Lyte's hymn, 'Abide with me,' was written when near death. 'Rock of Ages' came out first at the end of a short tract which Toplady had written in answer to Wesley, who, he thought, had taught the possibility of a Christian attaining perfection in this life. 'The only way in which the greatest saint can come before his Maker is in words like these.'

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And with the morn those angel faces smile,  
Which I have loved long since, but lost awhile,

referring to some visions in his youth which used to rejoice his heart."

Lord Nelson looks forward to a time when an authorized hymn-book shall be published "on as broad a basis as the Prayer-

Book itself." Such a collection, he thinks, gathered "from all sections and all ages of the church will be of itself a great incentive to true unity." He concludes:

"My chief desire has been to show that there are really many good hymns, the reflex of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all sorts of people in times of trial—whether of distress or of joy. Such hymns will always contain true poetry and an innate power to move the hearts of men, and this should be enough to save hymns from the degradation which the careless writing of hymns without any special call or inspiration has brought upon them. The inspired Bible is full of the finest poetry. Shakespeare, Tennyson, and other semi-inspired poets arising in our midst from time to time would rank next in their influence for good.

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LORD NELSON.

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